



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Jump Start # 1499

Galatians 5:20-21 “idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Our verse today comes from the dreaded works of the flesh. It is a listing of 15 specific sins that tear at our hearts and destroys our character and our relationships with God. These are not the marks of a holy person.

This list seems to be grouped by categories, such as sexual sins, attitude sins, drinking sins. Some of these sins seem obviously wrong. Others seem a bit innocent, even though God doesn't see them that way.

A few observations for us:

- Paul saw the need to again warn brethren about these things. He said, “I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you...” This wasn't the first time Paul had warned them about these things. It is important that we do not assume that everyone knows that these things are wrong. Paul didn't make that assumption. Also, more than one warning is necessary. Paul repeated his warnings. We must teach and teach and warn and warn. One time, isn't enough.
- This list isn't all inclusive. This isn't everything and all that is wrong. Murder is not in this list. Taking God's name in vain is not in this list. Theft didn't make the list. So we cannot conclude that this list is all that is considered wrong by God. It is not. The expression, “things like these,” opens the door for similar wrongs that are not listed here.
- Among the list are attitudinal sins. What we think is as important as what we do. It is the attitude sins that often lead to other sins. Disputes, dissensions and factions often arise out of envy and jealousy. Saying “no one got hurt,” isn't God's definition of right and wrong.

Now, I've said all that to just focus upon one word in this list, “jealousy.” That's a hard one for many of us to deal with. We don't mean to be jealous, we just are. We can be jealous of so many things, such as, the way a person looks. We can be jealous of someone's income, size of house, car they drive, number of vacations that they take, accolades that they have received, their family, their talent. Preachers can be jealous of each other. Churches can be jealous of each other. Jealousy does something to us on the insides. It lets the air out of our self esteem. We can feel worthless when thinking about another person. We can assume all kinds of bad things about another person to justify why they have what we don't. Jealousy can stay with us for a long time. It leads us to talking negative about the person we are jealous of. It pulls relationships apart.

(OVER)

Family members can be jealous of each other. One makes more money than the rest and that's all it takes for the jealous monster to show up. Church members can be jealous of one another. This usually is all that is needed to stir things up and cause trouble.

Isolating the reason why one is jealous isn't hard to do. "I'm jealous because he has and I don't..." The hardest thing about jealousy is getting rid of it. Holding on to those jealous thoughts and feelings isn't right nor healthy. It ruins relationships. It discounts the gifts of God. In the parable of the talents, each servant was given a different amount. The reason we are told is that it was based upon their ability. The five talent man could handle five talents. The one talent man could not. That's all it takes for some to become jealous. That thought doesn't come up in the parable.

So, how does one toss jealousy out of his heart and his home? It isn't easy. First, we must recognize that those feelings do not please God. Instead of being thankful that others are talented, the jealous heart is torn up because of that. Our feelings and thoughts towards others can ruin our souls and keep us from Heaven. So, all of this begins by understanding that God doesn't want us to think badly toward others. We are all His creation. Like snowflakes, each of us are unique and different in our own way. Some people have perfect pitch. A person can't really be taught that. Either they have it or they don't. Some have that artistic eye that can design and color things up in a special way. Others aren't like that. God has made each of us special and unique. If we were all the same, imagine how plain and boring that would be. Our uniqueness adds diversity to life. Instead of being jealous, be thankful.

Second, jealousy hurts. The jealous person has a hard time being in the same room with the person that he is jealous of. This feeling will plague their relationship. Within a family, within a fellowship, especially, jealousy pulls people apart. Sides are taken. Division follows. The jealous person finds like hearts that will support him in his jealousy. His negative talk poisons gatherings and makes it difficult to work or worship together. Right here, the jealous person has violated the second greatest command, to love your neighbor as yourself. He can't do that. He's jealous. He wants what the other guy has. It eats him and consumes him.

Thirdly, be like Jesus. That is always the help that we need. Jesus wasn't jealous. Jesus loved all, included all and taught all. We must be like Jesus. Everyone wants to be first chair in the orchestra and the starting quarterback on the football team. But there is no orchestra without the other musicians. There is no football team without other players. Each plays a role. Each must be the best that they can be. Some will never be quarterback. That's not their talent, role nor gift. Without blockers, the quarterback is worthless. He needs others. When we realize that God wants you to do what you can do, then jealousy starts to leave. We all have different roles and sometimes we can create jealousy by over emphasizing the importance of some. How we handle our own talent and how we deal with praise that comes to us, can help others not be jealous or it can be the very cause of jealousy.

God has made you just the way you are. Short guys always want to be taller. The ones with high pitched voices want a deeper voice. Those with no hair on their head, want hair. Contentment kills jealousy. Finding joy and purpose as you are will help drive out jealousy.

This one isn't easy. It cripples many of us. It colors how we see others. It affects our souls.

Maybe it's time to open the door and tell jealousy to hit the road. Maybe it's time to count your blessings. Maybe it's time to be thankful that there are so talented people around you. Maybe it's time to just be like Jesus.

